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## DOS & DON'TS OF EVENT PLANNING

### Dos

Always assume everything will go wrong and make plans to prevent this happening.

When planning the event put yourself in the position of the guests and in your mind walk through step by step the experience they will receive. This should ensure that you cover all aspects of the event.

Remember that the experience starts to happen long before the event commences. How will the details be communicated? Have you grabbed their attention and created a desire to attend?

Timings are crucial to ensure the event flows freely. A drinks reception beyond 45 minutes means guests are light headed and hungry. A five course dinner may appear to be an elaborate treat but guests may be keen to hit the dance floor and will resent having to stay seated at the table. Contingency time is a must for presenters who don't know when to stop!

Consider alternative ideas to promote a relaxed and interactive atmosphere. Instead of serving coffee at the table opt for a coffee station in a quieter room, not all guests want to hear the booming DJ. Alternatively, giant games are a great source of post dinner entertainment and provide an interesting alternative for those who wish to avoid the dance floor.

Take care to check that you are using professional and reliable suppliers. A good tip is to ask them to provide you with relevant documentation to support their service. Suppliers should provide copies of their liability insurance certificates; relevant association membership certificates; risk assessments, health & safety policies, electrical testing certificates etc. Always take up references before making your booking.

Think outside the box to maximise the use of your budget. With coffee and mints starting around £2.50 per head that's a lot of wasted budget if most guests have left the table and headed for the bar by the time these are served. Instead, book on a consumption basis and only pay for what you use. Cheese & biscuits are a nice touch to end your meal but again can be expensive on a per head basis. An alternative is to consider a plate per table or canapé versions Instead of individual portions.

At Christmas time balance creative décor with fire risks. Merry guests have a tendency to dispose of napkins and party hats dangerously close to naked candle flames!

Appoint somebody to do the dirty work! Not a pleasant subject to discuss but so many events are remembered for all the wrong reasons. Unfortunately blocked toilets and dirty sinks appear at all the best events, including Royal Ascot!

Do have a senior member of staff primed to raise a glass to toast and thank staff for a great year/performance/campaign. We see so many feedback sheets saying that guests were disappointed not to hear from the company on the evening.

### **Don'ts**

Cutting costs is fine but cutting corners is to be avoided if you want a successful event.

Don't worry about pleasing everyone – you'll never achieve this and you'll just get frustrated with the organising instead of enjoying it.

At the staff party don't rely on your company's first aid officer to stay sober and treat any guests unfortunate to require treatment. Our recommendation is to book a bespoke first aider who will hopefully be a waste of money. If you are relying on the venue to provide first aid cover we recommend that you ask to see up to date certificates for the relevant personnel.

Don't rely on the venue's recommendation for their dinner dance numbers. Most venues quote numbers based on a small dance floor space. From experience an overcrowded dance floor is a sure way to receive negative feedback from your guests. Make sure they have enough room to dance properly.

Don't forget to send out a set of questions and answers prior to the event taking place. Although there will always be somebody who doesn't read them most guests find this quite helpful in settling any anxieties they may have.

Don't order cheap undrinkable wine. Your guests will feel unmotivated and demoralised, as this will reflect poorly on their perceived value to the company.

Remember to avoid alcohol at events with outdoor activities, a few glasses of Bucks Fizz before taking part in archery, shooting or Quad biking is most definitely NOT recommended.

Don't forget to adequately name and date your seating plan. Seating plans are notorious for changing on the hour and this system will help all parties to easily identify the current version.

Don't be embarrassed at asking all suppliers to confirm all agreements in writing you need to be able to easily reference all arrangements if there are any problems.

Events are about experiences. Experiences should be memorable. Memorable should be for all the right reasons. Don't overlook the power and expertise of using a professional event management company to help you achieve this!